



COLBY FREE PRESS

Wastewater treatment plant to undergo study

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council unanimously gave the public works department approval to work with an engineering firm in McCook, Neb. to study the town's wastewater treatment plant at its meeting Tuesday.

The council's decision was based on information it received from Gerry Bieker, director of public works, regarding deficiencies at the sewer plant.

One of the bigger concerns being serious enough that residents in the northeast part of city are complaining about a bad odor originating from the site and inquiring what can be done to resolve it.

The city's mechanical sewer plant, which is located near Colby Country Club, was designed with a 40-year lifespan and that was 40 years ago, Bieker said. In the memorandum to the council, Bieker outlined all the sewer plant deficiencies with the biggest being the digester wall at the site.

"The digester wall has several holes in it



The digester wall at the treatment plant is visible in the center of the above picture.

which allows the reaeration zone to leak into the digester," he said. "This leak does not allow us to turn the air up in the digester where it needs to be and the lack of air causes the di-

gester to go anaerobic resulting in the bad odor problem."

Bieker told the council that the wall is not repairable and cannot be replaced due to struc-

tural problems.

Although, other concerns ranged from the waste air lift pump needing repairs to air diffuser pipes and boots needing replacement, Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, indicated in her memorandum to council members that before any of these other items can be fixed, the city must address the digester wall.

Based on these problems and the age of the system, the council agreed it was vital to look at options for the sewer plant.

Reed Miller, with Miller and Associates in McCook, gave a short briefing to the council, saying they had several options. Some of those options would be in upgrading the existing facility, building a new mechanical or lagoon system or a combination of the above options.

The most expensive option would be to build a new mechanical-type system at a cost of \$6 to \$7 million with the lagoon system substantially less expensive, he said.

"Before we do anything," said Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, "I think we do need to study all the options."

Council members agreed, adding that it would be better to look at a long-range plan that would include all possible solutions rather than try to continue fixing an already aging system.

"I think the city has done a good job in maintaining its wastewater treatment facilities," Reed said, "considering that the concrete tanks and site are well over 40 years old with one addition dating back to the 1930s."

Following approval to study the sewer plant, Reed's firm will look at the condition of the existing facilities, future Kansas Department of Health and Environment's regulations and requirements, ammonia removal, disinfection, groundwater quality, lagoon lining, solids handling, mechanical or lagoon system and the user cost.

Armstrong had excused herself from the discussion while the engineering firm made its presentation and in the subsequent vote to approve the study due to a conflict of interest.

Editor's note: More council meeting highlights will appear in the Thursday edition of the Free Press.

A towering job



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Randy Skinner (left), and Brandon Rork with Watertower Paint and Repair of Clearwater, Iowa, brought up materials this morning as they

prepare to sandblast the interior of the Colby water tower. The work is part of the city's routine maintenance program.

County's recycling continues to progress

By **MAXINE NELSON**

Colby Free Press

Lynette Koon will be applying for money for a multi-county recycling grant, she told the Thomas County commissioners at their Monday meeting. Koon, director of both the local Conservation District and recycling program, said plans are underway to make the county the hub for recycling efforts in this area.

She said she had attended a waste conference in Emporia recently and was told this was probably the last year for recycling grants. A state official encouraged her to apply.

She said they are thinking of charging small fees to pay for transportation, labor and administration. The grants she has pay only for the building and equipment.

Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor, brought figures on costs at the landfill. He said it is expected to cost approximately \$18 per cubic yard to bury municipal solid waste at the new county landfill.

Referring to the time before government regulation of landfills, he said, "When it was just a hole in the ground and you could throw anything in, it cost about \$12 per cubic yard to maintain the landfill."

Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock said the goal of recycling is to keep as much as possible out of the landfill, and to "save our natural resources."

Koon said about 50 percent of the newspapers in the county are being recycled instead of going into the landfill.

She said she had a call from a man in Wichita who wants to bring a crusher device and trailer to the landfill and leave them there for people to recycle their aluminum cans. He will pay for the aluminum, depending on the market.

She said the recycling center is taking plastic bags again to keep them from being discarded and blowing around the countryside. She said they are sending them to the landfill since they do not have a market for them, but people are welcome to bring them to the landfill.

In other business:

- Sheriff Tom Jones and Undersheriff Mike Baughn talked about the backup generator for the law enforcement center. The present generator failed to come on when the power went off recently. The commissioners accepted a bid of \$15,155 for a new 4.5L John Deere Power Tech Engine and a New Magnapuls generator 62.5 KW.208V to 480V.3 phase installed and a maintenance plan to physically check the complete unit twice a month from Colby Implement. The maintenance plan will cost \$720 per year. They rejected bids of \$14,291, \$15,187, and \$15,527 for three different generator units, and a maintenance plan, from Central Detroit Diesel-Allison.

Commissioners Kersenbrock and Duane Dawes (Commissioner Ron Evans was absent) agreed the county should pay for the generator from capital outlay and maintenance funds, and not from drug money. S

Senate passes redistricting bill Tuesday; Graves backs off on veto threat

TOPEKA (AP) — A bipartisan Senate coalition held together and attracted enough extra votes for a redistricting bill to persuade Gov. Bill Graves to withdraw a veto threat.

The bill redrawing the Senate's 40 districts passed 29-11 on Tuesday and went to the House, where debate is planned early next week.

Graves last week threatened to veto the measure unless it were revised. But he backed off Tuesday after the plan received two more votes than the 27 needed to override a veto.

The coalition entered Tuesday's debate with 21 solid votes — from its 11 conservative Republicans and 10 Democrats — and picked up eight more.

"I'm going to support this map," said Sen. Dave Corbin, R-Towanda, explaining why he voted with the coalition. "I think we need to send a message to the governor and the people of Kansas — and move on."

During debate Tuesday, the coalition blocked four amendments, so that the bill passed as it emerged last week from

committee. Graves had vetoed an earlier Senate map supported by the coalition, which then made small revisions in drafting the latest plan.

Late Tuesday, Graves spokesman Don Brown said the governor would sign the bill even though it didn't do everything he wanted.

"It is his intent to sign the bill in the form it is in now and get it behind us," Brown said.

Senate President Dave Kerr and several other senators met with the governor after the Senate vote.

"I think he was fully prepared to veto it, if necessary," said Kerr, R-Hutchinson.

Kerr said the new map has enough changes that he and other senators advised Graves against vetoing the measure. Kerr said the governor's first veto led to alterations that made the second redistricting proposal more acceptable.

Lawmakers are redrawing Kansas House, Kansas Senate, U.S. House and State Board of Education to account for shifts in population over the past de-

cade. Redistricting became especially contentious after the coalition stunned moderate Republicans in mid-February by presenting its favored map during Senate debate and pushing it to passage.

Both the conservatives and Democrats said they were tired of being shut out of the process.

"This has been a long process, and I hope it's over," said Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka. "There has been a good faith effort to address the concerns the governor stated in his

veto message and individual concerns about the map."

Graves had criticized the earlier version because it was neither considered by a committee nor presented for public comment.

Clark voted "yes" on bill

State Sen. Stan Clark, R-Oakley, was one of the senators who voted yes to pass a bill redrawing the state 40 Senate districts on Tuesday. The 29-11 vote included 19 Republicans and 10 Democrats (yes) and 11 Republicans (no).

Briefly

Weather: Record low set

If you felt cold during the night there was a reason: the 10 degrees recorded at the Extension Center in Colby was a record-breaker, topping the old record low of 11 set in 1975. But it's going to warm up and we could see temperatures climb near the 80-degree mark, the National Weather Service said in its forecast at mid-morning today. Highs are expected to be in the mid-50s Thursday, upper 50s Friday, lower 60s Saturday, mid-60s Sunday, lower 70s Monday and near 80 on Tuesday. Lows during the period will generally range in the mid-30s to around 40. Showers and thunderstorms do make an appearance in Friday night's and Saturday's forecasts, rated at about 30-40 percent chance. Winds are not expected to be a factor at anytime during the forecast period. Colby's high Tuesday was 40. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 49 degrees. No precipitation yet this month. The records for April 3: 88 in 1929 and 11 in 1975. *(The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Trio to perform Sunday

The Western Plains Arts Association is sponsoring a group of performers known as the Starry Night Trio, in concert on Sunday, April 7, beginning at 3 p.m. (CDT) at the Gateway in Oberlin. Admissions at the door will be by Western Plains Arts Association season passes or tickets for adults \$10 and students \$5. This program, said Vicky Waldschmidt, media representative with the association, is presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Music boosters meet today

The Colby Music Booster Club will hold its regular meeting today at 5:30 p.m. at Colby High School. All parents of vocal and band students are encouraged to attend. The next major event for high band students is a competition in Oberlin on Saturday for solo and small ensembles, said Julie Groom, high school band instructor. The state large group ensemble festival is scheduled in Colby on

Thursday, April 18.

Kindergarten Roundup scheduled

Heartland Christian School announces its Kindergarten Roundup. The event will be held on Friday, April 19, from 8:20-11:30 a.m. at the school in Mingo. All students entering kindergarten for the 2002-2003 school year are invited to attend with their parents. To reserve your spot or to receive additional information, please contact the school office at 462-6419 before Monday, April 15.

Puddle Duck enrollment continues

Enrollment for Puddle Duck Preschool will continue Thursday, from 4-6 p.m., at 520 W. 5th, Colby. For information call Amy Jennings at 462-2603 or 462-8388.

Blood drive planned Thursday

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross is hosting a blood drive in Colby from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, at the American Legion, 1850 W. 4th St. Eligibility requires only that people be in general good health,

at least 17 years of age and weigh 110 lbs. or more. For questions call Jackie Stephens at 462-8122 or Jo Frahm at 462-2082, or 1-800-GIVE-LIFE.

Corn growers to gather in Colby

The Northwest Kansas Corn Growers' 9th annual informational meeting will be Thursday, at 7 p.m. at the Ramada Inn in Colby. Registration starts at 6:30 p.m. The meeting topic will be "Ethanol Production in Western Kansas." The supper is sponsored by area agricultural business supporters. For information call Julie Saddler, 462-2237.

Endowment meeting next week

The Colby Community College Endowment Association will hold their annual meeting in the Fireside Lounge at the student union, Monday, April 8, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Members of the Endowment Association are encouraged to attend this meeting. For information, call Pam Geishler at (785) 462-3984, ext. 684.

